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Arms Accord at Moscow Predicted

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Top U.S. officials predict that President Nixon will sign the first Soviet-American nuclear arms pact in Moscow this month, after a "major advance" in negotiations announced yesterday at the White House.

These sources maintain only "several details" of an arms limitation treaty remain to be wrapped up in the Helsinki arms talks over the next three weeks. According to the White House, Nixon and Soviet leader Leonid I. Brezhnev have now given their negotiators new instructions making agreement possible.

The accord — which both sides agreed a year ago to seek in intensive talks — is to include limitations on both defensive and offensive weapons systems.

The current breakthrough, officials imply results from an agreement to include a freeze on offensive submarine missile systems. The United States has been insisting there be a limitation on submarine-based missiles, Nixon said earlier.

But the White House supplied no details of a decisive hour-long strategy session the President held with key aides yesterday. Press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler only allowed that the progress achieved between the two sides "results in a broadening of the scope of the offensive freeze."

Leaders Stressed

The White House announcement stressed the personal involvement of both Nixon and Brezhnev. Ziegler revealed that the two leaders had "a number of confidential exchanges" over the past several weeks on strategic arms limitations—looking toward whether "major issues in these negotiations could be satisfactorily resolved."

"On the basis of these confidential exchanges," Ziegler continued, "the President has concluded the possibilities of reaching agreement have substantially increased."

Chief U.S. arms negotiator Gerard Smith—who attended yesterday's White House meeting together with Secretary of State William P. Rogers, Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird, presidential adviser Henry A. Kissinger, CIA director Richard Helms, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Thomas H. Moorer—arrived back in Helsinki today with his new instructions. Ziegler said Nixon was "confident" that Soviet representative Vladimir Semenov would be receiving new orders too, making possible a "mutually acceptable" agreement.

The White House carefully disassociated this gathering optimism on the arms control from the deepening gloom throughout the Washington establishment over the continuing North Vietnamese offensive in South Vietnam. Ziegler said the White House meeting yesterday concerned only strategic arms, and the announcement showed that progress on that front is possible without Soviet-American agreement on Vietnam.

"We have never associated the Helsinki talks with the situation in Vietnam," answered Ziegler when asked if the arms talks would stay on track regardless of the course of the war.

Ziegler indicated that one vehicle for the Nixon-Brezhnev exchanges on nuclear arms was the secret four-day meeting Kissinger held in Moscow ten days ago with Brezhnev. After that trip, Kissinger expressed confidence that an arms agreement was within reach.

Officials indicate that three

main ingredients are being negotiated — limits on defensive antiballistic missile systems (ABM), a freeze on ground-based offensive intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), and controls on submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBM).

ABM "Parity" Seen

Before yesterday officials on both sides had indicated they were in broad agreement on the first two categories.

The Soviet Union already has set up an ABM system around Moscow which also protects key Soviet offensive missile sites, and the United States is working on ABM complexes to protect two Minuteman offensive missile sites in North Dakota and Montana. The two sides, according to officials, have agreed on a treaty freezing these ABM installations at "parity levels," allowing somewhere between 150 and 200 launchers per system.

It is also understood that the two sides have agreed on "first measures" toward freezing intercontinental missiles—including the Soviet SS-9 missiles capable of knocking out the U.S. Minuteman. Currently the Russians have 1,510 ICBM's of all types, according to the Pentagon, compared with a total of 1,054 for the United States.

Where the United States now leads is in the third category—submarine missiles; the Russians had been opposed to including these in a freeze. The United States has 656 submarine-launched missiles, and is embarked on a \$900 million expansion. The Soviet Union has only 440 submarine missiles. The Russians are building 25 advanced Polaris-type submarines, which eventually would give them 42 such submarines overall, compared with 41 for the United States.

According to officials here, the agreement will not bar adoption of the latest technology, thus allowing both sides to increase firepower without increasing delivery systems. This means work could continue to perfect multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRV), a system which gives each missile more than 1 warhead.